

savings in both time and money will allow our land managers to more quickly complete on-the-ground projects to improve the health of our Nation's forests.

For too long our Nation's forests have been imperiled because of a planning process that is too cumbersome and takes too long, and usually results in forest plans that are out-of-date by the time they are finished. I applaud the efforts of the U.S. Forest Service to streamline our Nation's forest planning process to reduce red tape and paperwork. I am hopeful that this final rule will provide further tools for the U.S. Forest Service in appropriately managing our Nation's forests.

MAKING A COMMITMENT

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, as we begin a new Congress, I am hopeful that the Senate will consider and pass sensible gun safety legislation for the benefit of our families, communities, and police officers. The 109th Congress has the opportunity to act together on a bipartisan basis to pass legislation that will make our streets safer for all Americans.

In order to achieve a reduction in gun violence, we must commit ourselves to enacting legislation that supports this goal. The 108th Congress missed numerous opportunities to have a positive impact on safety in our communities across the nation. In the last Congress, we did not close the gun show loophole, we did not reauthorize the 1994 assault weapons ban, and we failed to make needed improvements to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System that would have made it more difficult for convicted criminals to gain access to guns.

Combating gun violence also requires a commitment to funding effective gun violence prevention and enforcement programs. Unfortunately, the Fiscal Year 2005 omnibus appropriations bill signed by the President in December eliminated much of the funding for one of these programs, known as Project Safe Neighborhoods.

The Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative focuses on increased enforcement of existing gun laws, vigorous prosecution of crimes committed with handguns, and gun violence prevention education. The project supports organizations working against gun violence and has provided over \$1 billion in funding to help prosecute gun crimes, hire personnel, provide training, and assist with community outreach activities. It is critical that we provide adequate resources to programs like the Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative in order to more effectively address the gun violence epidemic in this country.

I urge my colleagues to join me in working to adequately fund effective gun violence reduction programs and enact sensible gun safety legislation that will help to make our communities safer.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

CORPORAL JASON SCOT CLAIRDAY

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, I rise today, to honor a young man from Arkansas who had a passion for life, a gift for bringing smiles to the faces of those around him, and a sense of duty toward the country and the people he would serve with honor. Jason Scot Clairday was a loving husband, son, brother and friend. He was also a brave soldier who died a hero, trying to bring freedom to a people he had never met in a country he had never known.

Cpl. Clairday was the type of person others were naturally drawn to. He showed a genuine interest in their well-being and his gentle nature and infectious smile could brighten the darkest of moods. It was apparent to everyone around him that he approached every day with a rare enthusiasm and love for life. The youngest of three boys was often found playing sports or fishing and hunting along a nearby creek, enjoying the outdoors and the time spent with his friends and family. After moving to the small northern Arkansas town of Salem, he did what he did best, made friends, and quickly distinguished himself by excelling in high school athletics and becoming an active member of the First Baptist Church.

Cpl. Clairday enlisted in the United States Marine Corps shortly after graduating from Salem High School in 2001. It was a decision he was proud to make and members of the First Baptist Church remember the pride with which he wore his Marine dress blues while attending service. On July 30, just weeks prior to his deployment to Iraq, Cpl. Clairday married the love of his life, Sarah. After his military service, he looked forward to returning home to be with her, attending Arkansas State University at Mountain Home, and building a family life. He felt his experience in the Marine Corps was a way to better prepare him for that future.

While in Iraq, Cpl. Clairday sometimes spoke with friends and loved ones of liberating the war-torn country and making a better life for the Iraqi people. While he never talked much about the war, he preferred instead to talk about the end of his enlistment in the spring, the future and coming home to be with his new wife and his family. Sarah last spoke with her husband on December 3rd, when he was scheduled to enter Fallujah for 10 days with his fellow marines in an attempt to bring greater stability to the city prior to the Iraqi national elections slated for January. At the conclusion of the 10 days, he was to be granted a 2-day leave. Tragically, he was killed by enemy fire on December 12th, a day before he was to leave the area.

At his memorial service in Camp, Arkansas, more than 600 people would come to pay their respects to their fallen Arkansas soldier. At the conclusion of the service, Cpl. Clairday was buried with full military honors. The flag that had draped his casket was presented to

his young widow with the Purple Heart that he had posthumously earned for his gallant service on behalf of a grateful nation.

When we think of Jason Clairday, we will remember that he gave himself completely to every aspect of his life; his family, his community, and his country. The legacy of his 21 years is a testament to who he was. The love, the humor, the selflessness, and the passion with which he taught us to live our lives, will remain with us forever. My thoughts and prayers go out to his wife, Sarah, to his family, and to all those who knew and loved him.

SERGEANT MICHAEL A. SMITH

Mr. President. Today, I humbly rise to pay tribute to the life of Michael A. Smith and to honor the sacrifice he made on behalf of a grateful nation. Sergeant Smith was a friendly, easy-going young man who had one of those rare personalities that allowed him to quickly make friends with everyone he met. He was also a brave soldier, who died a hero, fighting for the beliefs, the people and the country he cared for deeply.

Sgt. Smith was born and raised in the small, southern Arkansas town of Camden. There, he is remembered by those who knew him best as a good and gentle soul, who was always concerned about the welfare of others, and often went out of his way to help them whenever they were in need. Upon his 1999 graduation from Camden Fairview High School, Sgt. Smith set his sights on Southern Arkansas University Tech. Attending the university would allow him to stay close to his family in Camden while pursuing his interest in computers. To help pay his way through college, Sgt. Smith joined the Arkansas Army National Guard. Once he completed his military service, he had plans to return home and begin his education.

Sgt. Smith became a member of the Guard's 39th Support Battalion. He was later called up to serve in Operation Iraqi Freedom, where he was stationed at Camp Taji, about 16 miles northwest of downtown Baghdad. To his comrades in the 39th, "Smitty" quickly became one of the guys; a dedicated soldier who never complained, always did his duty, and could be entrusted with the lives of those around him.

This November, family and friends of Sgt. Smith were excited with the news that he would be taking his leave of service, and would possibly be home before Thanksgiving. Tragically, 5 days before he was set to return to Arkansas, he was shot by a sniper while conducting patrols in Baghdad. As a result of the injury, he was flown to Landstuhl Army Medical Center in Germany and then to Walter Reed Medical Center in Washington, DC. His parents, Donald Ray and Deborah and his sister, Lai, came to visit him in the hospital's intensive care unit. Although Sgt. Smith never regained consciousness in his 2 weeks at Walter Reed, his family was with him in his

final moments before he passed away on November 26.

At his memorial service in Camden, Sgt. Smith's coffin, surrounded by red, white, and blue flowers, was placed at the front of his high school gymnasium. Throughout the service and in the aftermath of his son's passing, Donald Ray Smith described the outpouring of love from the community as "remarkable." It was a testament to the gratitude of a community fully aware of the ultimate sacrifice paid by their fallen Arkansas soldier in the name of freedom.

In the 24 years Michael Smith was with us, the impressions he made and the lives he touched will never be forgotten. Although he will be deeply missed by us all, it is his selflessness, his courage, and his heart that we will remember when we think of him. My thoughts and prayers go out to Donald Ray, Deborah, Lai, and the rest of his family, friends and loved ones.

SERGEANT JEREMY R. WRIGHT

Mr. BAYH. Mr. President, I speak today with a heavy heart and deep sense of gratitude in honor of the life of a brave young man from Shelbyville, IN. SGT Jeremy R. Wright, 31 years old, died on January 3 during a patrol when the vehicle he was riding in was struck by a roadside bomb near Kabul. With his entire life before him, Jeremy risked everything to fight for the values Americans hold close to our hearts, in a land halfway around the world.

A 1992 graduate of Southwestern High School, Jeremy went on to attend Wabash College where he won the NCAA Division III Great Lakes regional title in 1993 for distance running and graduated with honors as a chemistry major. Jeremy joined the Army in 2002, pursuing his long-time fascination with the military. Like most things Jeremy set his mind to, he was successful in his military career, becoming a member of the elite Green Beret. Wabash spokesman Jim Amidon shared memories of the former student with the Associated Press, saying his "rare combination of intellect, courage, discipline and passion made him a naturally brilliant distance runner . . . Those are the same qualities that made him a fine soldier, too, the kind of officer our country needs in the military."

Jeremy was killed while serving his country in Operation Enduring Freedom. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group, Fort Lewis, WA. This brave young soldier leaves behind his mother, Jackie Nickel and his father, Dale Wright.

Today, I join Jeremy's family, his friends and the entire Shelbyville community in mourning his death. While we struggle to bear our sorrow over this loss, we can also take pride in the example he set, bravely fighting to make the world a safer place. It is his courage and strength of character that people will remember when they think of Jeremy, a memory that will burn

brightly during these continuing days of conflict and grief.

Jeremy was known for his dedication to family and his love of country. Today and always, Jeremy will be remembered by family members, friends and fellow Hoosiers as a true American hero and we honor the sacrifice he made while dutifully serving his country.

As I search for words to do justice in honoring Jeremy's sacrifice, I am reminded of President Lincoln's remarks as he addressed the families of the fallen soldiers in Gettysburg: "We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here." This statement is just as true today as it was nearly 150 years ago, as I am certain that the impact of Jeremy's actions will live on far longer than any record of these words.

It is my sad duty to enter the name of Jeremy R. Wright in the official record of the United States Senate for his service to this country and for his profound commitment to freedom, democracy and peace. When I think about this just cause in which we are engaged, and the unfortunate pain that comes with the loss of our heroes, I hope that families like Jeremy's can find comfort in the words of the prophet Isaiah who said, "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces."

May God grant strength and peace to those who mourn, and may God be with all of you, as I know He is with Jeremy.

TRIBUTE TO JERRY EHRENFREUND

• Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I take this opportunity to honor and pay tribute to a distinguished individual, Jerry Ehrenfreund, who served as Chief Clerk in the Office of Printing Services from 1985 to 1990.

Mr. Ehrenfreund spent a lifetime in dedicated service to his country, serving in the Army and working for the Federal Government. In 1969, he began working for the Government Printing Office and worked on the staff which compiled the Federal Register. Shortly thereafter he was detailed to the Senate where he became the staff printer on the Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs and, later, the staff printer for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Mr. Ehrenfreund truly exemplified the positive work ethic and dedication to his job and was named the Chief Clerk in the Office of Printing Services in 1985. In 1990 he retired from the staff of the Secretary of the Senate and retired to Katy, TX.

Mr. Ehrenfreund passed away on July 14, 2004. His work in the Senate deserves special recognition, and I know

my colleagues will join me in honoring him. Mr. Ehrenfreund was held in high regard by all who knew him and will be deeply missed by his wife of 48 years, Sylvia, their two daughters and five grandchildren.●

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

IN RECOGNITION OF THE NATIONAL FUNERAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

• Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, I recognize the fundraising efforts of the National Funeral Directors Association NFDA. The NFDA is the largest funeral service organization in the world and is dedicated to funeral service professionalism and quality.

The recent tsunami tragedy in South Asia has created a desperate need for monetary donations to charitable organizations participating in the relief effort. In a direct response to President Bush's nationwide appeal to assist tsunami victims, the NFDA has established the Funeral Service Asian Relief Fund. The NFDA has asked its members, funeral service suppliers, and domestic and international allied organizations to contribute to this endeavor. All contributions will be directed to an appropriate charitable organization.

The generosity and caring of the funeral service industry was demonstrated during past humanitarian crises such as the September 11th terrorist attack and the Oklahoma City bombing. This new effort further proves the commitment of the NFDA to utilizing its resources for the benefit of those experiencing great hardship. I commend the charity of the members of the National Funeral Directors Association during this time of need in South Asia.●

HAYES CENTER AND VILLA HAYES

• Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, Hayes Center is in the southwestern part of my home state of Nebraska. Villa Hayes is in the southwestern part of the Republic of Paraguay. I rise today to highlight the unusual connection between these two towns, named for the same American President, which have forged strong ties despite the distance between them. Thanks to a historian's efforts, these towns share a bond that affirms the power of international friendship and the enduring legacy of President Rutherford B. Hayes.

In 1878, President Hayes arbitrated a boundary dispute between Paraguay and Argentina, awarding new territory to Paraguay. The country named a department and a city, near the national capital of Asuncion, for him. John Fatherley of Chicopee, MA, is a historian who studies President Hayes. During college studies in Paraguay, he learned about the country's respect for our 19th President, whose decision in 1878 enlarged Paraguay by 30 percent.